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FM AMEMBASSY BEIRUT
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 4472
INFO RUEHEE/ARAB LEAGUE COLLECTIVE PRIORITY
RUCNMEM/EU MEMBER STATES COLLECTIVE PRIORITY
RHMFISS/CDR USCENCOM MACDILL AFB FL PRIORITY
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC PRIORITY

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 07/06/2016
TAGS: [IR](#) [IS](#) [LE](#) [PGOV](#) [PTER](#) [SNAR](#) [SY](#)
SUBJECT: MGLE01: INDEPENDENT SHIA POLITICIAN SAYS
HIZBALLAH RATCHETING DOWN TENSIONS IN BIQA VALLEY

Classified By: Ambassador Jeffrey D. Feltman. Reason: Section 1.4 (d).

SUMMARY

1. (C/NF) In a late June meeting with econoff, independent Shia politician Ali Sabra Hamadeh reported that Hizballah has been cooling down its rhetoric in the Biqa Valley during the past three months. It seems the very confessional tensions that Hizballah has been working to inspire since the Hariri assassination have grown to concern Hizballah officials. Hamadeh viewed the June 1 riots as an example of anger in the Shia community, which had reacted with some violence in response to the LBCI television station airing a parody of Hizballah Secretary General Hassan Nasrallah. Hamadeh also reported that Shia hatred of the U.S. was high, and speculated that a military strike on Iran's nuclear weapons program would result in violence in Lebanon. In the Biqa Valley, Hizballah was working to join and take over a grass roots "pardon council" seeking to nullify some 33,000 outstanding arrest warrants. End summary.

HIZBALLAH COOLING THE
VERY FLAMES IT FANNED

2. (C/NF) In late June, econoff met with Ali Sabra Hamadeh, an independent Shia politician in the Biqa Valley and unsuccessful parliamentary candidate in 2005. Hamadeh, an opponent of Hizballah, said the party has been pulling back from its rhetorical offensive for about three months. Hizballah appeared to be concerned that the confessional tensions it inspired among the Shia were getting too high. Prior to the cooldown of the past three months, local Hizballah officials had been holding "war meetings" in the small villages of the Biqa Valley, according to Hamadeh. The purpose was nominally to prepare Shia localities in the event of confessional conflict, but the meetings degenerated into several hours of hate. The Shia citizens stood up and described Sunnis and Christians with strong curse words under the patronage of local Hizballah officials. Some even shouted: "We will kill them all!"

3. (C/NF) Hamadeh said that, in this context, he was not surprised by the June 1 riots in Beirut. Most Shia reacted to the riot by blaming LBCI for airing the parody of Hizballah Secretary General Hassan Nasrallah in the first place, according to Hamadeh. Most simply said that LBCI should not have aired the program.

4. (C/NF) Hamadeh reported that hatred for the U.S. remains

high in the Shia community. Hizballah has persuaded most Shia that the USG is responsible for the confessional tensions in Lebanon and in Iraq. When econoff asked if the USG got any credit in the Shia community for overthrowing the Shia-hating Taliban in Afghanistan and the Shia-murdering Saddam Hussein in Iraq, Hamadeh replied that for most it is not a rational decision to hate the U.S. Lebanon is a rhetorical society, so words speak louder than actions, he explained. Hamadeh speculated that a U.S. or Israeli military strike on Iran's nuclear weapons program would lead to violence in Lebanon, possibly against the U.S. Embassy.

HIZBALLAH CO-OPTING
ALL IN THE BIQA VALLEY

¶5. (C/NF) According to Hamadeh, Hizballah's latest initiative in the Biqa Valley is to co-opt a grass roots "pardon council." This pardon council of Biqa Valley citizens wants to erase some 33,000 outstanding arrest warrants in the Biqa Valley, some pre-dating the Syrian withdrawal. The warrants are for a range of offenses, including hashish farming. Hizballah does not condone the offenses or criminality, and is not involved in the drug trade, according to Hamadeh. He explained Hizballah's attempts to get involved and co-opt the pardon council as making sure that there were no Shia political movements in the Biqa Valley outside of Hizballah. Most of the arrest warrants are for Shia Muslims. Hizballah currently holds a near-monopoly on Shia politics in the Biqa Valley, even to the exclusion of the Amal Movement.
FELTMAN